

I moved on down to the next house
where halfway across the lawn
a little toy bulldog
came charging out
growling
whirling
with his putrid little eyes
seething
I caught him under the belly with
my left foot
and flung him up against a
picture window
and then I felt somewhat better
but not
entirely, hardly
so.

A LITTLE CAFE ON 6TH STREET IN PEDRO

went in about 1:30 p.m.
ordered the turkey sandwich
on wheat plus some
decaf,
opened the paper and
waited:

two men to my left
talking:
"well, I wasn't going to
say anything but I looked at
your haircut and I saw
something was
wrong"

"yeah, I was watching her
in the mirror and I thought,
'hey, what's she doing?'"

"I noticed it right
away ...

you should have said
something"

they went on talking about
the haircut and I went on
reading.

the sandwich and decaf
arrived with a side order
of

slaw and I began
eating.

"she should have taken more
off the left side"

"yeah, yeah, she's always given
me a good cut before"

"Yeah, I mean, it doesn't look
bad but somehow it doesn't look
right, you
know?"

"I know ... I might not go
back"

then
one of the men
asked for some
cherry pie:

"I really like your
cherry pie"

"me too ...!"

I finished my meal
left the tip
got up and walked to the
cash register near the
door.

the men were into their
cherry pies:

"I wasn't going to say
anything, it's really not a
big thing, you know ... but
I thought I'd better tell
you"

"oh, I knew"

"it'll all grow out, you'll
be all right"

"when it does, I don't think
I'm going back"

"it's not that bad, it's
just"

I paid and walked outside
and my car was there and
I got in and drove away
but I had to stop for a red
light
at Pacific
and
the turkey on wheat and
the slaw and the
decaf
huddled and bucked in
my stomach

and as I got the green
I thought
I might not
go back there.

ABOUT PAIN

my first and only wife
painted
and she talked to me
about it:
"it's all very painful
to me, each stroke is
pain ...
one mistake and
the whole painting is
ruined ...
you will never under-
stand the
pain"

"look, baby," I
said, "why doncha do
something ya like ta
do?"

she just looked at me
and I think it was her
first understanding of
the tragedy of our being
together.

such things usually
begin
somewhere.